

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00

AID-05 SY-05 OPR-02 A-01 USSS-00 SAB-01 SAM-01 IO-10

SCCT-01 EB-07 FAA-00 DOTE-00 SCS-03 SCA-01 OC-05

CCO-00 OMB-01 SR-02 ORM-01 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 /106 W

----- 035856

O 161125Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3900

CIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

DIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY ANKARA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY ATHENS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY ROME IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 4860

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, LE, LE PLO

SUBJECT: BEIRUT SITREP - 1000Z

REFS: A. BEIRUT 4845; B. BEIRUT 4844

SUMMARY: FIGHTING CONTINUES IN TROUBLE AREAS AROUND
BEIRUT AS EFFORTS ARE UNDER WAY TO IMPLEMENT EFFECTIVELY
CEASEFIRE WHICH WAS REPORTEDLY ARRANGED FOR 1000Z

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APR 15. WE ANTICIPATE THAT, EVEN IF EVENTUALLY EFFECTIVE,

COMPLETE END TO FIGHTING WILL TAKE SOME HOURS. END SUMMARY.

1. APPARENT PROGRESS DURING AFTERNOON AND NIGHT APR 15 TOWARD IMPLEMENTING CEASEFIRE BETWEEN PALESTINIANS AND PHALANGISTS PROVIDES FIRST REAL BASIS FOR HOPE THAT DETERIORATING SITUATION IN BEIRUT AND REMAINDER OF COUNTRY MAY BE BROUGHT UNDER CONTROL. ARAB LEAGUE SYG MAHMUD RIAD IS CREDITED BY MANY LOCAL PAPERS APPEARING MORNING APR 16 WITH SUCCESS IN WORKING OUT MODUS VIVENDI BETWEEN CONTENDING ELEMENTS BUT IT APPEARS HE HAD ASSISTANCE OF LOCAL FIGURES, INCLUDING PRES FRANJIE (STILL CONVALESCING IN AUB HOSPITAL, HENRI PHARAON, AND, POSSIBLY, SHIITE LEADER. IMAM MUSA SADR (REPORTS CONFLICTING). RIAD, WHO MET WITH PALESTINIANS AND LEBANESE QTE PROGRESSIVE UNQTE PARTIES (BUT NOT RPT NOT PHALANGIST LEADER, PIERRE GEMAYEL, WITH WHOM PRES FRANJIE APPARENTLY HANDLED CONTACTS), WILL PROBABLY LEAVE BEIRUT TODAY AT ABOUT MID-DAY. COUNSELOR OF EGYPTIAN EMBASSY, WHO HAS BEEN SCHEDULED FOR WEEK TO HAVE LUNCH WITH EMBOFF TODAY, CALLED AT 0800Z TO SAY HE WOULD BE UNABLE TO KEEP APPOINTMENT BECAUSE HE HAD TO ESCORT RIAD TO AIRPORT. DESPITE FACT OF CONTINUING CLASHES AND HEAVY EXPLOSIONS AT THIS TIME, DEPARTURE OF RIAD INDICATIONS WE HAVE RECEIVED FROM LEBANESE CONTACTS, SUGGESTS THAT AT LEAST BROAD OUTLINES FOR IMPLEMENTING CEASEFIRE HAVE BEEN SKETCHED.

2. MAJOR DEVELOPMENT PAVING WAY FOR EFFORTS TO BRIDGE GAP BETWEEN COMBATANTS WAS DECISION BY PHALANGE LEADER GEMAYEL TO ACCEDE TO PRES FRANJIE'S REQUEST THAT HE TURN OVER TO GOL AUTHORITIES TWO PHALANGISTS IMPLICATED IN SUDAY'S INCIDENTS IN AIN AL RAMMANEH. ACCORDING TO OUR INFORMATION, TWO SUSPECTS WERE DELIVERED TO GOL SECURITY OFFICERS AT 2130Z ON APR 15. PM SOLH OFFICIALLY ANNOUNCED ARRESTS AT 2315Z. POSSIBLE MINOR SNAG WAS SUBSEQUENT PLO STATEMENT THAT SEVEN RPT SEVEN PHALANGISTS WERE SOUGHT, ALTHOUGH Wafa in early morning release reportedly continued line that GOL CONTINUES EMPLOY ITS GOOD OFFICES TO CONTAIN CRISIS. SOMEWHAT MORE SERIOUS, IN TERMS OF EFFORTS TO ENFORCE ANY CEASEFIRE, WAS REPORTEDLY PALESTINIAN QTE REJECTION UNQTE FROM ASSERTION THAT ITS FORCES WOULD NOT

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RPT NOT ACCEPT RECONCILIATION WITH PHALANGE. RELIABLE US CORRESPONDENT HAS INFORMED US THAT 'ARAFAT, WHO HAS ALLEGEDLY ARRIVED IN BEIRUT, ESTIMATED THAT TWENTY-FOUR HOURS WILL BE REQUIRED FOR CEASEFIRE TO BE EFFECTIVE. ALTHOUGH SITUATION ON PALESTINIAN SIDE UNCLEAR AT THIS TIME, WE ALSO HAVE UNCONFIRMED REPORT THAT 'ARAFAT HAS BEEN FAVORING CEASEFIRE FOR LAST THIRTY-SIX HOURS, BUT HAS BEEN OPPOSED BY FATAH-NOTABLE ABU IYAD, WHOM 'ARAFAT LEFT IN CHARGE OF OPER-

ATIONS IN BEIRUT WHEN HE RETURNED APR 14 TO DAMASCUS. IF TRUE, THIS INTERNAL CONFLICT COULD ACCOUNT FOR BOTH DELAY IN IMPLEMENTING CEASEFIRE AND 'ARAFAT'S DECISION TO RESUME CHARGE LOCALLY.

3. DETAILS OF REPORTED CEASEFIRE PLAN REMAIN FRAGMENTARY. WE ORIGINALLY HEARD TRUCE WAS TO OCCUR AT 1200Z APR 15 BUT IT OBVIOUSLY DID NOT HOLD. WE ARE NOW INFORMED BY SEVERAL SOURCES THAT IT WENT INTO EFFECT AS OF 1000Z APR 15 (MIDNIGHT APR 15/16 LOCALLY) AND THAT EFFORTS NOW UNDER WAY TO GET WORD TO ISLOATED UNITS ON BOTH SIDES. WE MAY BE IN BETTWE POSITION TO JUDGE WHETHER DENOUEMENT ACTUALLY OCCURING BY THIS AFTERNOON. MAIN STICKING POINT WILL BE ABILITY OF QTE MODER-ATE UNQTE LEADERSHIP OF BOTH PHALANGE AND PALESTINIANS TO ENFORCE THEIR POLICY ON ELEMENTS WHO MAY NOT WISH TO SEE PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF CRISIS. WE HAVE SEVERAL REPORTS OF LOWER LEVEL PHALANGISTS WHO DOUBT POSSIBILITY OF SETTLEMENT AND PREPARED TO FIGHT ON. LIKEWISE, THERE ARE GROUNDS FOR QUESTIONING ABILITY AND/OR WILLINGNESS OF PALESTINIANS TO CON-TROL COMPLETELY QTE REJECTIONISTS UNQTE, WHO PROBABLY INCLUDE AMONG THEIR ALLIES NUMBER OF LOCAL MUSLIM AND LEFTIST ELEMENTS.

4. FIRING AND EXPLOSIONS PERSISTED THROUGHOUT THE NIGHT AND INTO THIS MORNING AFFECTING AREAS WHICH HAVE BEEN SCENE OF FIERCEST FIGHTING SINCE SUNDAY. ROVING BANDS ALSO ENTERED CENTER OF TOWN AND RAS BEIRUT TO PLANT EXPLOSIVE CHARGES (MAINLY PLASTIQUE) IN ABDEL AZIZ STREET AND AT BUILDING HOUSING FORMER PRES CAMILLE CHAMOUN'S OFFICES IN VERDUN STREET. NEARBY BOMBS AND HEAVIER MORTARS AND ROCKETS CURRENTLY IN USE BY BOTH SIDES MAKE ACTIVITY APPEAR CLOSER TO EMBASSY AREA. WE WOULD PLACE TOTAL TO DATE THROUGHOUT LEBANON AT BETWEEN 100 AND 120.
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5. DURING APR 15, SOME EFFORTS WERE MADE IN VARIOUS PARTS OF COUNTRY TO KEEP STRIFE FROM ADOPTING CONFESSIONAL CHARAC-TER. MARONITE LEAGUE, HIGHER ISLAMIC COUNCIL AND NATIONAL ORG (MUSLIM) MET AND REPORTEDLY AGREED THAT QTE MISUNDER-STANDING BETWEEN MILITIAS UNQTE MUST NOT RPT NOT BE ALLO-WED TO ENGAGE MUSLIM AND CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES. LOCAL QTE APPEASEMENT COMM UNQTE ALLEGEDLY FORMED IN SIDON UNDER LEADERSHIP OF DEPUTY BIZRI TO KEEP LINES OF COMMUNI-CATION AND RECONCILIATION OPEN BETWEEN MUSLIMS AND CHRISTIANS. MEETING OF QTE PROGRESSIVE AND NATIONALIST FORCES UNQTE MET AS ANTICIPATED AT 1500Z AT MAKASSED ASSOC AND OBSERVERS AGREE THAT, ALTHOUGH PARTICIPANTS REITERATED THEIR DEMANDS FOR ACTION AGAINST PHALANGE PARTY, PROCEEDINGS WERE NOT RPT NOT AS VITUPERATIVE AS THEY MIGHT HAVE.

6. SOLH CABINET HAS APPEARED THUS FAR TO HAVE PLAYED LITTLE DIRECT ROLE IN EVENTS OR EFFORTS TO ARRANGE CEASEFIRE AND PM IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY ISOLATED EVEN AMONG HIS OWN MINISTERIAL COLLEAGUES. SOME PARLIAMENTARY DEPUTIES, INCLUDING NUMBER IN CABINET, ATTEMPTED HOLD PARLIAMENTARY SESSION AT 0800Z THIS MORNING, BUT WERE UNABLE TO OBTAIN QUORUM. AT MOMENT 30 WHO SHOWED UP (NOT INCLUDING ANY TRIPARTITE OPPOSITION,) CURRENTLY HOLDING CLOSED MEETING AND EXPECTED TO ISSUE STATEMENT SOON.

7. BEIRUT AIRPORT IS OPERATING THIS MORNING AT ABOUT 80 PERCENT NORMAL WITH ONE-THIRD ITS STAFF UNABLE TO REACH AREA. AIRPORT HAS NO FUEL BUT PLANES ARE REFUELING BEFORE OR AFTER BEIRUT AND CONSEQUENTLY FLIGHTS SO FAR UNAFFECTED. AUB HOSPITAL PRESENTLY HAS FOOD FOR EIGHT DAYS OPERATION AND THIS CAUSING SOME CONCERN.

8. CONTRARY TO SOME NEWS REPORTS WHICH WE HAVE HEARD, ALL AMCITS ARE SAFE. USIS REGINAL SERVICE CENTER IN SINN AL FIL AND KENNEDY CENTER ARE CLOSED AS ARE MOST BUSINESSES THROUGHOUT TOWN.
GODLEY

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